

**T**homas Sydenham was born in the Year 1624, at *Winford Eagle* in *Dorsetshire*, where his Father *William Sydenham Esq;* had a large Fortune. Under whose Care he was educated, or in what Manner he passed his Childhood, whether he made any early Discoveries of a Genius peculiarly adapted to the Study of Nature, or gave any Presages of his future Eminence in Medicine, no Information is to be obtained. We must therefore repress that Curiosity which would naturally incline us to watch the first Attempts of so vigorous a Mind, to pursue it in its childish Enquiries, and see it struggling with rustick Prejudices, breaking on trifling Occasions the Shackles of Credulity, and giving Proofs in its casual Excursions, that it was formed to shake off the Yoke of Prescription, and dispel the Phantoms of Hypothesis.

That the Strength of *Sydenham's* Understanding, the Accuracy of his Discernment, and Ardour of his Curiosity might have been remarked from his Infancy by a diligent Observer, there is no Reason to doubt. For there is no Instance of any Man whose History has been minutely related, that did not in every Part of Life discover the same Proportion of intellectual Vigour; but it has been the Lot of the greatest Part of those who have excelled in Science, to be known only by their own Writings, and to have left behind them no Remembrance of their domestick Life, or private Transactions, or only such Memorials of particular Passages as are on certain Occasions, necessarily recorded in publick Registers.

From these it is discovered, that at the Age of Eighteen, in 1642, he commenced a Commoner of *Magdalen-Hall* in *Oxford*, where it is not probable that he continued long; for he informs us himself, that he was with-held from the University by the Commencement of the War; nor is it known in what State of Life he engaged, or where he resided during that long Series of publick Commotion. It is indeed reported, that he had a Commission in the King's Army, but no particular Account is given of his military Conduct; nor are we told what Rank he obtained when he entered into the Army, or when, or on what Occasion he retired from it.

It is, however, certain, that if ever he took upon him the Profession of Arms, he spent but few Years in the Camp; for in 1648 he obtained at *Oxford* the Degree of Bachelor of Physick, for which, as some medicinal Knowledge is necessary, it may be imagined that he spent Time in qualifying himself.

His Application to the Study of Physick was, as he himself relates, produced by an accidental Acquaintance, with Dr *Cox*, a Physician eminent at that Time in *London*, who in some Sickness prescribed to his Brother, and attending him frequently on that Occasion, enquired of him what Profession he designed to follow. The young Man answering that he was undetermined, the Doctor recommended Physic to him, on what Account, or with what Arguments, it is not related; but his Persuasions were so effectual, that *Sydenham* determined to follow his Advice, and retir'd to *Oxford* for Leisure and Opportunity to pursue his Studies.

It is evident that this Conversation must have happened before his Promotion to any Degree in Physic, because he himself fixes it in the Interval of his Absence from the University, a Circumstance which will enable us to confute many false Reports relating to Dr *Sydenham*, which have been confidently inculcated, and implicitly believed.

It is the general Opinion, that he was made a Physician by Accident and Necessity, and Sir *Richard Blackmore* reports in plain Terms, [*Preface to his Treatise on the Small-Pox*] that he engaged in Practice without any preparatory Study, or previous Knowledge, of the medicinal Sciences; and affirms, that when he was consulted by him what Books he should read to qualify him for the same Profession, he recommended *Don Quixote*.

That he recommended *Don Quixote* to *Blackmore*, we are not allowed to doubt; but the Relater is hindered by that Self-love which dazzles all Mankind from discovering, that he might intend a Satire very different from a general Censure of all the antient and modern Writers on Medicine, since he might perhaps mean either seriously, or in jest, to insinuate, that *Blackmore* was not adapted by Nature to the Study of Physic, and that, whether he should read *Cervantes* or *Hippocrates*, he would be equally unqualified for Practice, and equally unsuccessful in it.

Whatsoever was his Meaning, nothing is more evident, than that it was a transient Sally of an Inclination warmed with Gaiety, or the negligent Effusion of a Mind intent on some other Employment, and in Haste to dismiss a troublesome Intruder; for it is certain that *Sydenham* did not think it impossible to write usefully on Medicine, because he has himself written upon it; and it is not probable that he carried his Vanity so far, as to imagine that no Man had ever acquired the same Qualifications besides himself. He could not

but



but know that he rather restored than invented most of his Principles, and therefore could not but acknowledge the Value of those Writers whose Doctrines he adopted and enforced.

That he engaged in the Practice of Physic without any Acquaintance with the Theory, or Knowledge of the Opinions or Precepts of former Writers, is undoubtedly false; for he declares, that after he had, in persurance of his Conversation with Dr Cox, determined upon the Profession of Physick, he applied himself in earnest to it, and spent several Years in the University, [aliquot annos in academica palæstra,] before he began to practise in London.

Nor was he satisfied with the Opportunities of Knowledge which Oxford afforded, but travelled to Montpellier, as Desault relates, [*Dissertation on Consumptions*] in quest of farther Information; Montpellier being at that Time the most celebrated School of Physick: So far was Sydenham from any Contempt of academical Institutions, and so far from thinking it reasonable to learn Physick by Experiments alone, which must necessarily be made at the Hazard of Life.

What can be demanded beyond this by the most zealous Advocate for regular Education? What can be expected from the most cautious and most industrious Student, than that he should dedicate several Years to the Rudiments of his Art, and travel for further Instructions from one University to another?

It is likewise a common Opinion, that Sydenham was thirty Years old before he formed his Resolution of studying Physic, for which I can discover no other Foundation than one Expression in his Dedication to Dr Mapletost, which seems to have given rise to it by a gross Misinterpretation; for he only observes, that from his Conversation with Dr Cox to the Publication of that Treatise thirty Years had intervened.

Whatever may have produced this Notion, or how long soever it may have prevailed, it is now proved beyond Controversy to be false, since it appears that Sydenham having been for some Time absent from the University, returned to it in order to pursue his physical Enquiries before he was twenty four Years old; for in 1648 he was admitted to the Degree of Bachelor of Physic.

That such Reports should be confidently spread, even among the Contemporaries of the Author to whom they relate, and obtain in a few Years such Credit as to require a regular Confutation; that it should be imagined that the greatest Phy-

fician of the Age arrived at so high a Degree of Skill, without any Assistance from his Predecessors; and that a Man, eminent for Integrity, practised Medicine by chance, and grew wise only by Murder, is not to be considered without Astonishment.

But if it be on the other Part remembered, how much this Opinion favours the Laziness of some, and the Pride of others; how readily some Men confide in natural Sagacity, and how willingly most would spare themselves the Labour of accurate Reading and tedious Enquiry, it will be easily discovered how much the Interest of Multitudes was engaged in the Production and Continuance of this Opinion, and how cheaply those of whom it was known, that they practised Physic before they studied it, might satisfy themselves and others with the Example of the illustrious Sydenham.

It is therefore in an uncommon Degree useful to publish a true Account of this memorable Man, that Pride, Temerity, and Idleness may be deprived of that Patronage which they have enjoyed too long; that Life may be secured from the dangerous Experiments of the Ignorant and Presumptuous; and that those who shall hereafter assume the important Province of superintending the Health of others, may learn from this great Master of the Art, that the only Means of arriving at Eminence and Success are Labour and Study.

From these false Reports it is probable that another arose, to which, though it cannot be with equal certainty confuted, it does not appear that entire Credit ought to be given. The Acquisition of a Latin Stile did not seem consistent with the Manner of Life imputed to him; nor was it probable, that he who had so diligently cultivated the ornamental Parts of general Literature, would have neglected the essential Studies of his own Profession. Those therefore who were determined, at whatever Price, to retain him in their own Party, and represent him equally ignorant and daring with themselves, denied him the Credit of writing his own Works in the Language in which they were published, and asserted, but without Proof, that they were composed by him in English and translated into Latin by Dr Mapletost.

Whether Dr Mapletost lived and was familiar with him during the whole Time in which these several Treatises were printed, Treatises written on particular Occasions, and printed at Periods considerably distant from each other, we have had no Opportunity of enquiring, and therefore cannot de-



demonstrate the Falshood of this Report : But if it be considered how unlikely it is that any Man should engage in a Work so laborious and so little necessary, only to advance the Reputation of another, or that he should have Leisure to continue the same Office upon all following Occasions, if it be remembered how seldom such literary Combinations are formed, and how soon they are for the greatest Part dissolved, there will appear no Reason for not allowing Dr Sydenham the Laurel of Eloquence as well as Physick. \*

It is observable, that his *Processus Integri*, published after his Death, discovers a more Skill in the Latin Language than is commonly ascribed to him; and it surely will not be suspected, that the Officiousness of his Friends was continued after his Death, or that he procured the Book to be translated only that by leaving it behind him, he might secure his Claim to his other Writings.

It is asserted by Sir Hans Sloane, that Dr Sydenham, with whom he was familiarly acquainted, was particularly versed in the Writings of the great Roman Orator and Philosopher; and there is evidently such a Luxuriance in his Style, as may discover the Author which gave him most Pleasure, and most engaged his Imitation.

About the same Time that he became Batchelor of Physic, he obtained by the Interest of a Relation, a Fellowship of *All Souls College*, having submitted by the Subscription required to the Authority of the Visitors appointed by the Parliament, upon what Principles, or how consistently with his former Conduct, it is now impossible to discover.

When he thought himself qualified for Practice, he fixed his Residence in *Westminster*, became Dr of Physic at *Cambridge*, received a Licence from the College of Physicians, and lived in the first Degree of Reputation, and the greatest Affluence of Practice, for many Years, without any other Enemies than those which he raised by the superior Merit of his Conduct, the

\* Since the foregoing was written we have seen Mr Ward's Lives of the Professors of *Gresham College*; who in the Life of Dr Mapletost says, that in 1676, Dr Sydenham published his *Observationes medicæ circa morborum acutorum historiam & curationem*, which he dedicated to Dr Mapletost, who at the Desire of the Author had translated them into Latin; and that the other Pieces of that excellent Physician were translated into that Language by Mr Gilbert Havers of *Trinity College Cambridge*, a Student in Physick and Friend of Dr Mapletost. But as Mr Ward, like others, neglects to bring any Proof of his Assertion, the Question cannot fairly be decided by his Authority.

brighter Lustre of his Abilities, or his Improvements of his Science, and his Contempt of pernicious Methods supported only by Authority in Opposition to sound Reason and indubitable Experience. These Men are indebted to him for concealing their Names, when he records their Malice, since they have thereby escaped the Contempt and Detestation of Posterity.

It is a melancholy Reflection, that they who have obtained the highest Reputation, by preserving or restoring the Health of others, have often been hurried away before the natural Decline of Life, or have passed many of their Years under the Torments of those Distempers, which they profess to relieve. In this Number was Sydenham, whose Health began to fail in the 52d Year of his Age, by the frequent Attacks of the Gout, to which he was subject for a great Part of his Life, and which was afterwards accompanied with the Stone in the Kidneys, and its natural Consequence, Bloody-Urine.

These were Distempers which even the Art of Sydenham could only palliate, without Hope of a perfect Cure, but which, if he has not been able by his Precepts to instruct us to remove, he has, at least, by his Example, taught us to bear; for he never betray'd any indecent Impatience, or unmanly Dejection, under his Torments, but supported himself by the Reflections of Philosophy, and the Consolations of Religion, and in every Interval of Ease, applied himself to the Assistance of others with his usual Assiduity.

After a Life thus usefully employed, he died at his House in *Pall-mall*, on the 29th of Dec. 1689, and was buried in the Isle, near the South Door, of the Church of *St James's in Westminster*.

What was his Character, as a Physician, appears from the Treatises which he has left, which it is not necessary to epitomise or transcribe; and from them it may likewise be collected, that his Skill in Physic was not his highest Excellence; that his whole Character was amiable; that his chief View was the Benefit of Mankind, and the chief Motive of his Actions the Will of God, whom he mentions with Reverence, well becoming the most enlightened and most penetrating Mind. He was benevolent, candid, and communicative, sincere and religious; Qualities, which it were happy if they could copy from him, who emulate his Knowledge, and imitate his Methods.

N. B. The above Account of Dr Sydenham is prefixed to the New Translation of his Works, by John Swan, M. D. of New-castle in Staffordshire



S. I. R,

*The World having been stunn'd with Relations and pompous Advertisements, of a new Cure for the Gout, I beg leave to lay before it an Extract from the medicinal Dictionary, written by R. James. M. D. on that occasion.*

Yours, &amp;c. J. B. A

**A** *Antimony* has in all times, since its Medicinal Virtues were first discover'd, afforded the Empirics their most boasted Secrets, as may be known by the Irregularity of their Operations; for *Antimonial Remedies* have this singular Property, that they will sometimes operate with great Violence; and sometimes even in the same Dose, and same Person, without any apparent Alteration of Circumstances, shall have no sensible Operation.

This, if there was no other, is a sufficient Evidence, that the Pill Mr *Ward* first set out with, was *Antimonial*. The specific Preparations he makes use of, are not very important, since there are many different Sorts of them made, by depriving this Mineral of a Part of its Sulphur, and laying the Reguline Part naked, which will have much the same Effects, in the same small Dose.

I shall conclude, says he, this Article of *Antimony* with an Account of a medicine, lately advertised, for which a Patent has been obtained; Mr *Hayward's* Powder for the Rheumatism and Gout, which promises no less than the Cure of the last-mention'd Distemper, after it has puzzled all the Physicians in the World for so many Centuries. It seems therefore to be of some Importance to examine how far this Remedy is likely to answer the Character given of it by the Persons concerned in point of Interest to promote the Sale.

Mr *Hayward's* Remedy as enroll'd in the Court of Chancery, pursuant to act of Parliament, is a Preparation of *Antimony* and *Nitre*, made by rubbing them together, till no shining Particles of the *Antimony* are apparent. Of this each Dose for an Adult is twenty-seven Grains.

I have before observed, that *Kunkel* found some Relief in Pains with which he was afflicted, by taking crude *Antimony*; his *Troches* are, at this Day, famous for erratic Pains, at *Frankfort* and *Nuremberg*, and are prepared of crude *Antimony*; which join'd with *Nitre*, may sometimes do Service in slight Rheumatic Cases, if duly persisted in. But I am far from believing, that it is possible to cure any Degree of the Gout by such a Remedy.

With respect to Patents for Medicines in general, it is not very easy to come at a Knowledge of the real Efficacy of such medicines; for, it is not always certain, that the Cases published by the Proprietors, are literally true in every Circumstance; or, tho' they are, we only hear of such as were attended with Success, whereas a thousand Cases, in which the Remedy had no good Effect, may be suppressed.

There are, however, People enough in the World, of more Faith than Understanding, to make it worth the while of designing Men, to vend for Secrets the most common Preparations of the Shops, because their Prices are usually very exorbitant.

If the Price of this Remedy is not more extravagant than those of other *Nostrums*; we may judge of the rest by this. Crude *Antimony* is Four Pence a Pound, and never above Six-pence, bought in Quantities. *Nitre* is, about one Shilling a Pound, tho' seldom so much. Supposing then a Pound of each to be sold at five Shillings, for every twenty-seven Grains, the whole two Pounds will sell for 142*l.* and some little more, enough to pay for the Ingredients.

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